AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

POLITICAL-MILITARY INTEGRATION

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

REQUIREMENT

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MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

April 1995

ABSTRACT

The American political system is that of a liberal democracy. There is an inherent mistrust of a large standing army by the American people. Because of this, there has been considerable friction between political and military leaders on how best to integrate the military in the national security decision making process during peace and war. Prior to World War II, the question was solved during peace by not having a large standing army. Then during war, a successful balance was struck which integrated political and military viewpoints to form national security policy. However, the Cold War upset the balance as the political viewpont expanded and eventually suffocated the military viewpoint from the national security policy making process. This political enlargement resulted in a military detached from the national security decision process during the Vietnam War. The outcome was a political-military integration failure and a debacle in Vietnam. In the two decades following the Vietnam War, both political and military policy-making viewpoints achieved an unique balance. The balance was attained by several political and military policy corrections to make sure there was "never again" another Vietnam. The manifestation of political-military balance was the 1991 Persian Gulf War. With the end of the Cold War, the changed political viewpoint, the US must again find the appropriate balance of political and military viewpoints in the national security policy making process. To find the right balance, a relook at past failure and success can give insight into how the appropriate political-military balance can be realized and maintained.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lt Col Jay H. Lindell graduated from the US Air Force Academy in 1978. He is a command pilot with over 3000 flying hours in the F-16 and F-111 aircraft. He completed a M.P.A. from Troy State University in 1987 and graduated from the US Army Command and General Staff College in 1992. His most recent assignment was to Headquarters Air Combat Command, Plans and Programs Directorate (XP), Langley AFB, where he was the A-10/F-16 Programs Manager. Although Lt Col Lindell's experience does not lend itself to tackling the lofty issues of political-military integration, he has always had a keen interest of the Vietnam War. His expanded study of the Vietnam War during the Air War College year served to initiate this paper on political-military integration.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Clausewitz asserted that war is a continuation of policy by other means, he proposed a question to consider. Clausewitz asked, "The only question, therefore, is whether, when war is being planned, the political point of view should give way to the purely military (if a purely military point of view is conceivable at all): that is, should it disappear completely or subordinate itself, or should the political point of view remain dominant and the military be subordinated to it?"[1] It is a question that all governments, certainly democratic governments, have had to answer. In the American experience, political and military viewpoints rarely balanced in the national security policy making process. Since revolutionary beginnings, the military viewpoint in peacetime had little influence in national security policy. During war the military viewpoint gained considerable credibility and became a significant part in national security policy. The Cold War changed this traditional pattern and when the US went to war in Vietnam, the military viewpoint did not balance the political viewpoint. However, in the aftermath of the Vietnam failure, corrections were applied to the political-military integration process. Two decades later, the manifestation of political-military balance was realized during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The purpose of this paper is argue that balanced political and military viewpoints are the key to effective national security policy decisions. To give insight to this argument, a relook of the American political-military integration experience from revolutionary beginnings through the 1991 Persian Gulf War will be conducted. The political-military integration failure of the Vietnam War will be highlighted as well as the road to a balanced political-military integration process two decades later.

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[1]Carl Von Clausewitz, <u>On War</u>, ed. Michael Howard, Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 607.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATION OF AMERICAN POLITICAL-MILITARY INTEGRATION

Revolutionary Beginnings to World War II

The early American political culture was formed from the concept of an ideal liberal democracy. It was the belief in life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness without subjugation to a monarch or autocratic government. It was this fundamental belief that moved the American people to overthrow the British government, to free themselves from tyranny, and form their own representative government. As such, it was also this liberal democratic belief that led to a colonial mistrust of a standing army. George Washington as Commander of the American Army stated to Congress, "I see such distrust and jealousy of military power that the Commander in Chief has not an opportunity, even by recommendation, to give (his officers) the least assurance of reward for the most essential services."[2] The role of a standing army also sparked an intense debate in the newly formed Congress. It was argued that "tyranny is usually hoisted by a legal army; a legal army is the instrument for giving permanency to the evil political principles, fraud and force; and at no time, has a standing mercenary army been the steady auxiliary of national self government, or obedient to election."[3]

The constitutional founders; however, realized the need for a standing professional army, a sort of necessary evil to protect the new republic. James Madison, a principle framer of the Constitution argued, "How could a readiness for war in time of peace be safely prohibited, unless we would prohibit, in like manner, the preparations and establishments of every hostile nation? This means of security can only be regulated by the means and danger of attack."[4] The

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[2]Gen Edward C. Meyer, "Toward A More Perfect Union In Civil-Military Relations," Parameters 9 (June 1979), 79.

[3]John Taylor, Principles and Policy of Government (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 176.

[4]James Madison, The Federalist No. XLI, in The Federalist, ed. Henry C. Lodge (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1888), 251.

Continental Congress dismissed the idea of an army based on the European eighteenth century model; an army answerable only to a monarch, constitutional or otherwise. They believed there should be safeguards established to prevent the executive to use the army as arbitrary power "which has so often and so successfully been used for the subversion of freedom."[5] Alexander Hamilton suggested the "The President is to be commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States. It would amount to nothing more than the supreme command and direction of the military and naval forces ... the declaring of war and to the raising and regulating of fleets and armies, all which, by the Constitution under consideration, would appertain to the legislature."[6] The Constitution eventually incorporated the principle for division of control over the military in government. Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution makes clear the legislative oversight of the military: "The Congress shall have power ... to declare war ... to raise and support Armies ... to make Rules for the Government and Regulations of the land and naval forces ..."

The division of control over the military between the President and Congress fused well with the ideals of a liberal democracy. Antimilitarism was muted, and the American people accepted the role of a small standing army. The small army concept also conformed to the geopolitical viewpoint that America was like an island, separate from the affairs of Europe and free from continental invasion. Although the War of 1812 briefly awakened the new republic that it was not an island and it did need a professional army, Congress quickly disarmed the standing army after war. However, increased emphasis was placed on additional national militia or reserve forces as part of a peacetime army. Backed by a National Militia Act, the job of the "regular army was to serve as a training school for officers and to provide a nucleus for the large armies necessary in time of war."[7]

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[5]Mackubin Owens, "American Strategic Culture and Civil-Military Relations: The Case of JCS Reform," <u>Naval War College Review</u> 39 (Mar-Apr 1986), 46.

[6]Alexander Hamilton, <u>The Federalist No. LXIX</u>, in <u>The Federalist</u>, 430.

[7]Arthur D. Larson, "Military Professionalism and Civil Control: A Comparative Analysis of Two Interpretations," <u>Journal of Political and Military Sociology</u> 2 (Spring 1974), 58.

This pattern of a small standing army, backed by large militia forces, continued through the nineteenth century. When aroused to make war, the nation would commit the necessary resources and manpower to expand rapidly from a peacetime cadre to train and equip the force necessary for war. When hostilities ended, the army would rapidly shrink to its previous peacetime force posture. The small standing army became a force in being, performing garrison duty at isolated outposts to counter threats to the growing western frontier. "The general absence of any major threats to the nation's existence, apart from the civil war, left the military services with only the routine problems of continental defense, internal development (especially of rivers and railroads), protection of trade, contingency planning, and passive support of a largely isolationist foreign policy."[8] As a result, the army's role in national security policy during peace was minimal.

This pattern of intermittent political-military integration in formulating national security policy continued to World War II. During peace, the military had little influence in national security policy. However, during war the military became highly influential in the formulation of national security policy. This was evident during the war with Mexico as General Winfield Scott had considerable authority to establish policies as he occupied territory. During the Civil War, General Grant had significant influence in formulating national policy. As the South was occupied, General Grant formulated policy for the re-establishment of state and local governments. Even during World War I, General Pershing had wide discretion in dealing directly with the Allies and to establish military requirements on the US government at home.[9]

However, this strong military influence was restricted to wartime policy matters. Immediately following World War I, Generals March and Pershing proposed plans to Congress to maintain an army much larger than the pre-World War I force. Congress, determined to put

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[8]Amos A. Jordan, William J. Taylor, Jr., Lawrence J. Korb, American National Security 3rd ed., (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 156.
[9]Ibid.

America back on its island of liberal democracy, rejected these plans. To insure the demobilization of the World War I expeditionary force, Congress appropriated little money for the military. The funding level towards the military remained low into the 1930's allowing the military to essentially maintain a cadre force of personnel. During the 1930's, General MacArthur, Army Chief of Staff, vented his frustration on peacetime military funding. He burst out to President Roosevelt during a budget meeting, "When we lose the next war, and an American boy, lying in the mud with an enemy bayonet through his belly and an enemy foot on his dying throat, spits out his last curse, I want the name not be MacArthur, but Roosevelt."[10] On December 7, 1941, the peacetime hibernation of the US military was again aroused to make war. In short time, the peace time cadre of military personnel expanded to again make war.

World War II

Although World War II was a massive logistical and mobilization effort of unprecedented scale in American history, the traditional pattern of US political-military balance was maintained in wartime. The military transformed from small peacetime cadres and was highly influential in the formulation of national security policy during World War II. Theater commanders were given much latitude to make decisions concerning the US strategy during the war. General Eisenhower made the decision when and where to invade Europe. It was also Eisenhower's decision to not take Berlin and to halt General Patton's Third Army from further advancement into Czechoslovakia. It was General MacArthur who framed strategy to invade the Phillipines rather than to side-step the islands. Most of the credit for the military latitude in national security decisions is generally given to General of the Army, George C. Marshall. Marshall had a reputation for honest, comprehensive military advice and earned respect and trust from President Roosevelt. In orchestrating political-military integration, General Marshall was also careful to maintain a clear distinction between purely military matters and political matters. In responding to

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[10]Meyer, 77.

proposals for American forces to liberate Prague and much of Czechoslovakia, he commented "I would be loathe to hazard American lives for purely political purposes."[11] As a result of Marshall's influence, US national strategy reflected a high degree of political-military integration.

Cold War Political Viewpoint Domination

Immediately following the end of World War II, America again began a retreat to an island of liberal democratic idealism. The massive manpower buildup during the war was rapidly demobilized and the wartime industrial economy began a transformation to commercial production. However, the Soviet Union did not demobilize like other western nations. At the end of World War II, 175 Soviet Army divisions remained in Eastern Europe following the surrender of Germany. Ideological differences, continued disagreements over war reparations, the failure of the Soviets to withdraw from Iran, the toppling of the democratic government in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and the Berlin blockade in 1948-49 aggravated tensions between the Soviets and the US. In 1949, the Soviets exploded a nuclear device becoming the second nation to have the most destructive weapons in history. By the time the Korean War erupted in 1950, the strategic environment had become polarized between the US and the USSR. The chance of a nuclear confrontation between the Soviets and the US had now become a possibility. With the military's fingers on the triggers of nuclear weapons, much liberal democratic legitimacy was given to Talleyrand's remark, "War is much too serious a matter to be trusted to the military."[12]

The strengthening of political control over the military had actually started immediately after World War II. In 1947 Congress passed the National Security Act "to strengthen the machinery of political control over the armed forces."[13] The Act created the National Military

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[11]Forrest C. Pogue, <u>George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victroy</u> (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 573.

[12]Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Pe′rigord, 1754-1838, French statesman and diplomat. Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, Little, Brown, and Company, Inc., 1980. Quote also attributed to Clemenceau.

[13]Morris Janowitz, <u>The Professional Soldier</u> (New York: The Free Press, 1971), 347.

Establishment with cabinet level civilian service secretaries, National Security Council (NSC), the

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and gave legislative legitimacy to the wartime creation of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Additionally, the US Air Force was created. In 1949, the Act was

amended to have a single cabinet level Secretary of Defense heading the Office of Secretary of

Defense (OSD) with authority over all the services. It essentially overhauled the entire national

security decision making process placing "civilians firmly in control of recommendations to the

President concerning most policy and resource allocation issues."[14] The Congressional

justification for the Act was explained as "consistent with the tradition in focusing on political and

administrative arrangements for direction and control of the military by the Congress, the

President, and the Secretary of Defense and other civilians in the defense establishment."[15]

However, the JCS were concerned that the military would not have a voice in national

security policy and submitted an alternative to the NSA in which the wartime JCS organization

would stay the same. In the JCS plan (McNarney Plan), the civilian secretaries would only advise

the President on "political and administrative matters" with limited authority over the service

chiefs. The McNarney Plan stipulated that the service chiefs would still maintain ultimate

authority over their service with direct cabinet level access to the President.[16] This concern was

realized when President Truman ordered the US military into South Korea. The recommendation

to use American forces to repel the North Korean attack came from Secretary of State Dean

Acheson. Neither the Secretary of Defense, Louis Johnson, or the JCS were consulted

concerning the use for or against military force in Korea.[17]

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[14]Meyer, 81.

[15]Larson, 59.

[16]Samuel P. Huntingdon, The Soldier and the State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 336.

[17]Richard K. Betts, Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 17.

As the war in Korea continued, the military had much less influence in national security policy as it had in World War II. It was clear the political-military balance changed from World War II. There would be no "unconditional surrender" or conclusive military victory over the enemy. The considerable political oversight of the war frustrated the Commander of Far East Forces, General Douglas MacArthur. He was continually denied permission to pursue enemy aircraft into Chinese airspace and bomb enemy hydroelectric plants. His recommendations to attack the Chinese mainland were rejected by President Truman. In an attempt to solicit Congressional support against Truman's orders, MacArthur was relieved from command for going too far in challenging President Truman. It had become very clear where the limit of military influence was in the political-military relationship.[18]

The Eisenhower Administration accelerated the Cold War trend to strengthen political influence in the national security policy process. There was a growing understanding that the Cold War was actually "political warfare" and the means of war, namely nuclear weapons, had to be closely controlled by political factors. As a result there was a breakdown between the traditional military and political roles of policy making.[19] Many interagency State Department, NSC, and DOD committees and sub-committees were formed to deal with matters of national security policy and the growing military-industrial complex. Additionally, Congressional staffs expanded to manage issues of defense policy. By 1958, the Secretary of Defense had more than a dozen principal assistants and a staff of more than 1,000 professionals. "The Army Chief of Staff observed that he had more than 19 civilian layers between himself and the President."[20]

To gain control of this bureaucracy, Congress passed the Defense Reorganization Act of 1958. It "asserted the direction, authority, and control of the Secretary of Defense over the executive department and clarified the operational chain of command that runs from the President

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[18]Ibid., 18.

[19]Jerome Slater, "Apolitical Warrior or Soldier-Statesman," Armed Forces and Society 4 (Nov 1977), 103.

[20]Janowitz, 347.

and Secretary of Defense to the combatant forces."[21] The Act also removed the service chiefs from the operational chain of command and clarified their sole support and administrative responsibility. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS) authority was clarified as strictly advisory with the service chiefs having veto power over the CJCS decisions making the CJCS essentially a consensus builder between the service chiefs. As a result, the CJCS viewpoint and influence in national policy was significantly discredited with civilian staffs in OSD playing a greater role in the policy making.

Although Cold War political control over the military was consistent with the idealism of a liberal democracy, it gravely weakened political-military integration. The military was unable to balance political views with professional military viewpoints in the national decision making process. This was evident in Cold War confrontations during the Kennedy Administration. It was only by accident that the JCS discovered the CIA concocted plan for the Bay of Pigs invasion. This discovery was "long after the decision to invade Cuba had been made."[22] The clearest example of weakened military integration is the close political control of military tactical operations in two national crisis during the early 1960's. In the 1961 Berlin Crisis, when it was decided to send an army battalion task force down the autobahn to Soviet encircled Berlin, President Kennedy took personal control of the vehicle convoy and directed its movement. In 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Secretary of Defense McNamara took repeated control of the naval blockade from the Pentagon War Room to position individual ships. A confrontation eventually arouse between and Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Anderson, and Secretary McNamara when Admiral Anderson requested the Secretary return to his office to let the Navy run the blockade.[23]

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[21]The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1993, Armed Forces Staff College Pub 1, 2-4.

[22]Katherine Boo, "How Congress Won the War in the Gulf," The Washington Monthly 10 (Oct 1991), 34.

[23]Ibid., 10.

Not only had political control proliferated during the Cold War, but the size of the US military also reflected the US policy to maintain and enhanced conventional war making capability to fight and deter war across the spectrum of conflict. The expanded conventional forces were based on a new policy of 'flexible response.' Flexible response was the new policy which would enable the US to avoid the serious dilemma to escalate rapidly to nuclear war because of the lack of conventional capability to stop a Soviet attack in Europe. Presumably the military forces had to be large enough to fight a war with the Soviets in Europe and the Chinese in Asia and still handle a brushfire operation elsewhere. Additionally new forces called Special Forces were developed by President Kennedy's direction that would be trained to conduct counter-insurgency operations that would specialize in brushfire operations. By 1965, there was one such brushfire ongoing in a place called Vietnam.

In 1965 when President Johnson made the decision to commit significant combat forces to Vietnam, the traditional pattern of US political-military integration had been broken. A large standing military force was now maintained in peacetime with nearly 50 percent of this force assigned to overseas locations. This was not in line with what the principles of a liberal democracy and not what the founding fathers had intended for the US military force posture. Additionally, another area of traditional sacrosanct military authority, command and control of military tactical operations, had been breached. This detachment of the military from national security decision making set the stage for President Johnson to take direct personal control of the Vietnam War, at the exclusion of the military viewpoint.

CHAPTER III

VIETNAM: POLITICAL-MILITARY INTEGRATION FAILURE

The Military Detachment

The detachment of the military from national security decisions started at the top of the Johnson Administration. President Johnson clearly did not trust the military and relied "less on military advice than any US President since Woodrow Wilson."[24] The root of this mistrust evolved from the Korean War experience.   The memories of the Chinese hordes coming across the Yalu River were still fresh in Johnson's mind as well as most senior political leaders. Speaking in Baltimore in April 1965, Johnson recalled the memories of Chinese intervention in Korea. "The rulers in Hanoi are urged on by Peiping [sic]...It [China] is a nation which is helping the forces of violence in almost every continent. The contest in Vietnam is part of a wider pattern of aggressive purposes."[25] General Westmoreland, Commander Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV), termed this fear of a Korea like war in Vietnam a "phobia." It made President Johnson extremely skeptical of military advice, particularly in regard to airstrikes against North Vietnam.[26]

President Johnson's principal focus on his domestic agenda also disconnected the military from the domestic politics of the nation. President Johnson's Great Society program was the focal point of his domestic agenda which promoted the most sweeping social reforms since Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal program. Johnson saw the New Deal Program get suffocated by World War II, and was determined to not let the Vietnam issue seize the political spotlight.[27] The President feared public attention and Congressional debate on Vietnam would arm his right

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[24]W. Hays Parks, "Rolling Thunder And The Law Of War," <u>Air University Review</u> 33 (Jan-Feb 1982), 7.

[25]Col Dennis Drew, <u>Rolling Thunder 1965: Anatomy of a Failure</u> (Maxwell AFB: Air University Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education [CADRE]report, 1986), 9.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Stanley Karnow, <u>Vietnam, A History</u> (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 479.

wing opponents with the means to sabotage his proposed program. In an interview after his presidency with Doris Kearns [the most intimate of Johnson's biographers], Johnson recalled; "If I left the woman I really loved - the Great Society - in order to get involved with that bitch of a war on the other side of the world, then I would lose everything at home."[28] In late 1965, President Johnson directed an approval to intensify bombing be implemented in a low-keyed manner in order "to avoid undue public concern and excitement in Congress and domestic public opinion."[29] Because President Johnson stymied political debate on the Vietnam issue, he essentially isolated the Vietnam issue from the American people. Although President Johnson knew the political sensitivity a liberal democratic nation had for its military forces, this detachment of the military from political debate proved pivotal in the political-military balance of policy in Vietnam.

In early 1965, President Johnson reviewed a gloomy report from MACV recommending military action be taken to avoid a disastrous defeat in South Vietnam. In response, the JCS recommended the overwhelming use of military power against North Vietnam, namely airpower, to achieve a military victory. The proposal was for an eleven week, short and violent bombing campaign against ninety-four vital targets in North Vietnam. However, President Johnson immediately refuted the recommendation opting for a more gradual bombing campaign (Rolling Thunder) that he could use to send political signals to North Vietnam. Additionally, ground forces would be deployed in early 1965 to protect the air bases from guerrilla attack. The bombing campaign became essentially an exclusive political tool for carrot and stick diplomacy with President Johnson firmly in control. Johnson would state:

> I saw our bombs as my political resources for negotiating a peace. On the one
> hand, our planes and our bombs could be used as carrots for the South,
> strengthening the morale of the South Vietnamese and pushing then to clean up
> their corrupt house, by demonstrating the depth of our commitment to the war.

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[28]Ibid., 320.

[29]George C. Herring, America's Longest War (New York: Newbury Award Records, Inc., 1986), 128.

On the other hand, our bombs could be used as sticks against the North, pressuring North Vietnam to stop its aggression against the South. By keeping a lid on all the designated targets, I knew I could keep control of the war in my own hands.[30]

However, the critical actions that alienated military leaders from the political-military policy balance was not the rejection of advice concerning the escalation of the war, but the tight political control exercised by the Johnson Administration. President Johnson doled out specific targets in bi-weekly increments even directing ordnance loads and the time to attack some of the targets. President Johnson declared: "I won't let those Air Force generals bomb the smallest outhouse north of the 17th parallel without checking with me."[31] These targeting sessions took form at Tuesday White House lunch sessions which were used as Vietnam policy sessions with Department of State personnel and Johnson's close trusted advisors. The CJCS did not attend the lunch sessions until late 1967 when President Johnson was criticized by Senator Stennis for ignoring military advice.[32] President Johnson also directed many political restrictions that further restrained air operations. Restricted areas surrounded the vital industrial areas of North Vietnam to include permanent prohibited areas around the major industrial areas of Hanoi and Haiphong. There were also many White House directed bombing halts, the longest lasting 37 days. Sometimes the reasons were to increase the "propaganda effort" and another time a bombing halt was ordered to observe Budha's birthday.[33]

Secretary of Defense McNamara also played a part in alienating the military from the political-military decision making process. Operational decisions without military counsel made by McNamara and civilian subordinates were routine. Not only did this tend to alienate the JCS from McNamara, but it added fuel to an already adversarial relationship between the JCS and their

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[30]Doris Kearns, <u>Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream</u>, (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 264.
[31]Betts, 10.
[32]Ibid., 8.
[33]Ibid., 119.

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civilian boss.[34] An example of the JCS detachment from operational decision making and the

side step of military command is provided by a F-105 wing commander in 1965 at Takhli,

Thailand:

> When Takhli was no more than an outpost in the early days, one of our
> majors got a very personal phone call. He had fired up and was on his way to the
> end of the runway with a flight of four, armed with napalm and headed for a
> nondescript mission in the easy packs. The duty officer sped after him in a staff
> car and herded him back to the chocks, where he dutifully shut down and reported
> to the command center telephone. It was McNamara, none other than the Sec Def
> himself. The major accepted his direct order to have the napalm downloaded and
> to change targets. He fired up again and dashed off to attack his secondary target,
> a bridge, with his cannon. I often wondered how many people above the rank of
> major Mr. Secretary bypassed over those ten thousand miles of phone lines.[35]

Although the military was "politically" detached through the early years in Vietnam,

military leaders also demonstrated a lack of political consciousness in making strategy

recommendations. Proposals were repeatedly presented to President Johnson that were not in

tune with US policy. The Air Force Chief of Staff, General Curtis Lemay, recommended in 1964

to bomb North Vietnam "back into the Stone Age."[36] Later in 1966 General Lemay's

replacement, General J. P. McConnell, would further demonstrate a lack of political-military

integration when questioned on the conduct of air operations in North Vietnam in 1966, "I submit

that a clear distinction must be made between our political and our military objective in the

Vietnamese War."[37] President Johnson would later state to his biographer concerning the

military proposals:

> And the generals. Oh, they'd love the war, too. It's hard to be a military hero
> without a war. Heroes need battles and bombs and bullets in order to be heroic.

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[34]Parks, 7.

[35]Jack Broughton, <u>Going Downtown</u>, (New York: Orion Books, 1988), 196.

[36]Mark Clodfelter, <u>The Limits of Airpower</u> (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 77.

[37]Gen J. P. McConnell, "The Role of Airpower in Vietnam," in <u>Vietnam Vignettes,</u> Air
War College, Dept. Military Studies text (June, 1994), an address in March 1966, 38.

That's why I am suspicious of the military. They're always so narrow in their appraisal of everything. They see everything in military terms.[38]

Fueling this political mistrust through the end of the Vietnam War was the revelation in 1972 of senior military officers falsifying mission reports. General John Lavelle, Seventh Air Force Commander, ordered bombing missions against unauthorized targets in North Vietnam. These mission violated political directives to not engage targets in North Vietnam. He then ensured the missions were never reported. Not only was this a clear breach of integrity, but had possibly derailed ongoing secret State Department negotiations with North Vietnam. When the case went public, other senior officers distanced themselves from Lavelle causing skepticism on what level and how deep false reporting from Vietnam went.

The Vietnam Syndrome

As the US staggered away from failure in Vietnam, the tragic cost was shocking; nearly 58,000 American military dead and more than 700,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese dead. The military began a soul searching explanation for what went wrong. Military leaders, notably airpower leaders, declared the military was shackled by the politicians from doing its mission. They declared the gradualistic use of airpower and overly restrictive rules of engagement imposed by political constraints squandered airpower into a senseless war of attrition. Airpower leaders reconciled that political limitations prevented airpower from gaining victory in Vietnam and cite the eleven day 1972 bombing offensive, Linebacker II, as a demonstration airpower can win limited wars if unhampered by political controls. Admiral Grant Sharp, operational commander at Pacific Command during the Rolling Thunder stated; "Our airpower did not fail us; it was the decision makers."[39] The comments by General William Momyer, Seventh Air Force Commander during Rolling Thunder, epitomize the overall disillusionment of Vietnam. "My regret is we

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[38]Kearns, 252.
[39]Ibid., 208.

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didn't win the war. We had the force, skill and intelligence, but our civilian betters wouldn't turn us loose."[40]

Political leaders also recognized the mistakes as public condemnation towards US policy magnified during the Nixon Administration. Clark Clifford who succeeded Robert McNamara as Secretary of Defense in 1968 after McNamara resigned in disillusionment, explained the political failure; "Countries, like human beings make mistakes. We made an honest mistake. . . We felt that we were doing what was necessary. It proved to be unsound."[41] An attitude of mistrust replaced domestic confidence in the military. During the early 1970's it became socially fashionable to brand returning Vietnam veterans as "baby killers." Veterans were advised to not wear the uniform home and ROTC cadets on many college campuses wore their uniforms only in ROTC class for fear of their safety. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger commented on this public disenchantment towards the military when US forces were withdrawn from Vietnam. "Vietnam is still with us. It has created doubts about American judgment, about American credibility, about American power - not only at home, but throughout the world. It has poisoned our domestic debate. So we paid an exorbitant price for the decisions that were made in good faith and for good purpose."[42]

The breakdown in political-military integration during the Vietnam War was immense. It was not the result of any single political or military leader, institution, or presidential administration. It was the culmination of nearly two decades of Cold War political enlargement; a natural result of what the nation, born of a liberal democracy, wanted at the height of Cold War nuclear tension. This political takeover of military decision making was so total that many tactical war fighting decisions were made by politicians during the Vietnam War. The inevitable result of this unbalanced political-military means to wage war was failure. A failure that led to a national

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[40]Clodfelter, 145.
[41]Karnow, 21.
[42]Ibid.

psychosis, the 'Vietnam Syndrome,' that blamed the military for the tragic waste of lives and squandering of resources. It was a failure military leaders vowed "never again" to repeat. In the following two decades, military and political leaders would recognize the failures of Vietnam and make corrections to attain a balance in the national security decision making process.

CHAPTER IV

CORRECTING POLITICAL-MILITARY BALANCE

The immediate effect of the 'Vietnam Syndrome' was a period of turning inward and introspection by the military. Even before the US military forces were extracted from Vietnam, the military plunged into a critical self-examination. It revealed a military that was in shambles. Morale throughout the ranks was at rockbottom. Soldiers wore peace symbols and refused to go into combat. Drug abuse was so widespread that according to an official 1971 estimate, nearly a third of the troops were habitual users of opium or heroine. Marijuana smoking was routine. Race relations had so deteriorated that there were race riots at service clubs and aboard ships. There were cases of outright insubordination in the field to include "fragging" of unpopular officers and noncommissioned officers. Even the Air Force which boasted of better morale and troop performance, reviewed a dismal record of overall air combat performance. The Air Force victory to loss ratio in Vietnam was a little over 2 to 1. After the Korean War, the Air Force posted a ratio of nearly 14 to 1. This was a significant drop in combat performance.[43]

Forging a New Military Professionalism

Throughout the military, there was a call to change this situation. Although there was a definite perception that political leaders had tied the hands of the military, the military did not take a "stabbed in the back" vindictive approach to correct the situation. Instead, the military saw it as an institution had become too politicized, caught up in the body count, ticket punching, careerist mentality rather than focusing on the war fighting skills that the military profession demanded. In 1970, General Westmoreland, then Army Chief of Staff, directed a survey to analyze the professional climate in the army. The results were characteristic of the general feeling

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[43]Richard P. Hallion, <u>Storm Over Iraq</u> (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 20.

throughout the military that senior leaders were not 'minding the store'. "There was a sense of moral outrage among both company- and field-grade officers (i.e., lieutenants through colonels) that their seniors had sold out to careerism and venal self-interest. 'Duty, honor, country' had become mere words, not a code to live by."[44] Colonel Harry Summers, chartered by the US Army to conduct an analysis of military strategy in the Vietnam War, summed up the military failure this way:

> Instead of being experts in the application of military force to achieve the political ends of the United States we became neophyte political scientist and systems analysts and were outclassed by the civilian professionals who dominated national security policy under Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara after 1961. It is no wonder that the President turned to these civilian professionals rather than the military for strategic advice.[45]

To overcome this perception of incompetence, the military rededicated themselves to a 'new professionalism' and the art of waging war. The core of a new professionalism would be revamped training programs, tough, realistic, and focusing back on the Soviet threat in Europe. For its part, the US Army in 1973 established Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) at Fort Monroe, Virginia. The purpose of TRADOC would be to consolidate all army training under one command and to provide the doctrinal foundation for all army organization, training, and equipment. TRADOC spawned new 'how to fight' manuals as well as required training standards in a 'back to basics approach' to match war fighting skills with doctrine. The centerpiece of new army doctrine was embodied in the 1982 publication of Field Manual 100-5 (Operations), Airland Battle Doctrine. The doctrine espoused a new aggressive warrior spirit, individual initiative, and emphasized the deep battle to keep the enemy off balance. TRADOC also integrated new technologies such as the Patriot missile system, Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS), and Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) in war fighting

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[44]Col Harry G. Summers, Jr. (Ret), On Strategy II, A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 55.
[45]Col Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy: The Vietnam War In Context (Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College, 1981), 28.

and defined the requirements for the future.   Probably more than any other initiative, TRADOC initiated a new standard of professionalism to the army, that would garner a new respect from the political leaders by 1990.

The Navy and Air Force also initiated a 'back to basics' approach to rejuvenate war fighting skills. In 1972, the Navy established the "Top Gun" Fighter Weapons School at Miramar Naval Air Station. The program was in direct response to the deemed low kill to loss ratios in Vietnam. Also in 1972, the Air Force developed the aggressor training program at Nellis Air Force Base. The aggressor squadron simulated Soviet threat aircraft and tactics and engaged other Air Force fighter squadrons in frequent training exercises. Additionally, the Air Force in 1975 established the 'Red Flag' program as part of the Tactical Fighter Weapons Center at Nellis. The purpose of the 1970's Red Flag program was to simulate air combat as realistic as possible in a NATO scenario to give combat aircrews an experience based quality edge to confront the Soviet quantity edge. Fighter, bomber, and eventually combat support squadrons would rotate through the Red Flag program at regular intervals becoming combat tested in demanding force employment scenarios. Eventually, the program expanded to include sister service and allied nations air forces.

Although the military benefited greatly from enhanced combat training programs, the major boost to increased capability and confidence came from the increased defense budget in the late 70's. It was an initiative that started with the Carter Administration and continued through the Reagan Administration 1980's defense build. There were watershed years for the military in the mid 1980's as new weapon systems and smart munitions were fielded in all the services to modernize and increase combat capability. General John Vessey's, CJCS 1982-85, popular term 'hollow force' was no longer used to describe military readiness. Equally important were increases in military pay and quality of life programs for the all volunteer military. These new initiatives enabled the military to recruit and retain a higher degree of educated and skilled personnel than ever before in the post Cold War military. In the early 70's, only about half the army's soldiers had graduated from high school. By 1990, the figure had risen to 95 percent, a

remarkable increase.[46] What resulted by the late 80's was an enhanced military capability and greater self-confidence that characterized a new professional military. Although a modernized professional military gained increased political respect, it was also recognized that unless military strategy fused with security policy, a military professionalism mattered little. Military and political leaders would also set about to correct the political-military strategy breakdown in Vietnam.

Fusing Military Strategy with National Policy

As the Vietnam War wound down, there was a recognition by military and political leaders alike that the military had not been allowed to play its part in the formulation of strategy. The first actions to reform the process actually occurred when the Nixon Administration took office during the Vietnam War. President Nixon's Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, initiated a 'participatory management style'. This new style was a "slapping down of the civilian units in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, which had acquired power under McNamara - particularly the offices of International Security Affairs and Systems Analysis - and a reenfranchisement of the service chiefs in decision making."[47] Additionally, under Nixon there was an infusion of military officers into Henry Kissinger's National Security Council staff. Kissinger's deputy became a colonel, Alexander Haig, and within a few years the post was held by a three-star general, Brent Scowcroft. In 1975, Scowcroft would even succeed to the National Security Adviser job. Although these changes did much to improve political-military integration in the policy process, it could be no guarantee that the military could be squandered again in a Vietnam like situation.

When President Reagan took office in 1981, he appointed as the new Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger. Weinberger, a Harvard Law School graduate, had experience in military affairs stemming from his service during World War II. He was a combat veteran, fighting in the earliest combat as a infantryman in the jungles of New Guinea. In this early

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[46]Hallion, 88.
[47]Betts, 9.

experience, he developed a special sensitivity for missions the politicians sent the troops to do.[48] In the earliest years of the Reagan Administration, this sensitivity was rekindled, particularly by the NSC. Weinberger commented, that "the NSC staff's eagerness to get us into a fight somewhere-anywhere-coupled with their apparent lack of concern for the safety of our troops, and with no responsibility therefore, reminded me of the old joke let's you and him fight this out."[49]

The incident that made it clear to Secretary Weinberger that military strategy and national policy were not operating together was the Beirut bombing tragedy. In October 1983, a terrorist drove an explosive laden truck into the marine compound killing 241 marines as they slept. At least 100 more marines were wounded. The marines operated under such vague rules of engagement that commanders did not even allow security guards to have chambered rounds in their weapons. Security guards, unable to fire their weapons, were unable to stop the truck as it dove past them into the barracks. The incident crystallized Weinberger's thinking on the need to fuse military strategy and national security policy. In an address to the National Press Club in November 1984, Weinberger warned; "Policies formed without a clear understanding of what we hope to achieve would also earn the scorn of our troops, who would have an understandable opposition to being used - in every sense of the word - casually and without the intent to support them fully."[50] Weinberger went to outline six tests to weigh the use of military forces overseas. These six tests became known as Weinberger Doctrine.

1. The United States should not commit forces to combat overseas unless the particular engagement or occasion is deemed vital to our national interest or that of our allies.
2. If we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning.
3. If we do decide to commit forces to combat overseas, we should have clearly defined political and military objectives.

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[48]Caspar W. Weinberger, Fighting For Peace (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1990), 8.
[49]Ibid., 159.
[50]Ibid., 437.

4. The relationship between our objectives and the forces we have committed - their size, composition and disposition, must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.
5. Before the US commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress.
6. The commitment of US forces to combat should be a last resort.[51]

The Weinberger Doctrine became a sort of National Security Council checklist during the Reagan Administration to insure the appropriate use of military force an instrument of national policy. In essence the doctrine insured there was a closer tie between the use of military force and national policy. It made political and military policy makers understand the Clausewitz dictum that "at the highest level the art of war turns into policy - but a policy conducted by fighting battles rather than by sending diplomatic notes."[52] In a series of international crises, military force was appropriately used in small battles to send political signals. In 1985, terrorists had murdered an elderly American citizen on board the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro and dumped his body overboard. Navy fighters were successfully used to intercept and force an Egyptian airliner carrying the terrorist to Algiers to land in Italy. The terrorist were taken into custody by Italian authorities. In 1986, the Air Force and Navy engaged in a complex joint operation, Eldorado Canyon, that successfully attacked Libya to strike a blow against terrorism. In 1987, in a major show of US resolve and support for friendly Gulf States, the US reflagged Kuwaiti oil tankers and escorted them in the Persian Gulf when both Iran and Iraq had declared them legitimate targets. In 1988, the US Navy engaged in operations against the Iranian Navy in the Persian Gulf and Iranian oil platforms in a major show of force. In a single day, half the Iranian Navy was destroyed negating a threat to vital sea lanes. In all these US military actions, the Weinberger Doctrine insured the use of military force sent the correct political signal, fusing military strategy with national security policy.

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[51]Ibid., 442.
[52]Clausewitz, 607.

Another action that helped fuse military strategy with national policy was the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act. The impetus for the Act started with Senator Barry Goldwater, a retired Air Force Reserve General. Senator Goldwater was a leading Republican proponent of the military and vehemently objected to the way the Vietnam War was fought. He assailed the Johnson Administration in a 1976 statement.

> I'd like the American people to realize what a desperate situation our men were placed in over there [Vietnam] by civilians in this country who didn't know a damned thing about war - including Robert S. McNamara, who I think did more damage to our strength than any man we've ever had; and Lyndon Johnson, who didn't know anything about what he was doing.[53]

Senator Goldwater also cited the weak role of the CJCS during the Vietnam War. He blamed this on the circumvention of the CJCS by political policy makers. He observed that "senior civilian officials rely on civilian staffs for counsel that should be provided by professional military officers."[54] Senator Goldwater also had bipartisan support from Congressman Bill Nichols, a democrat who sat on the House Armed Services Committee. Nichols, who had lost a leg in World War II, was extremely committed to insure a political hands off approach in strictly military matters. Nichols contended that a strengthened CJCS role would enable the CJCS "to speak to the president who appointed him as an unfettered commander instead of as the mouthpiece of a committee."[55] Nichols also recommended giving more operational authority to the field commanders (unified commands), so that they would have more voice in operational matters than even the CJCS in times of crisis.

Sparked by a lackluster joint performance report during the 1983 Grenada invasion, the Goldwater-Nichols legislation passed in 1986 with only four votes against it in all of Congress.

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[53]Bobbe Lindland, "Congress Should Stay Out of Tactical Military Decisions," Armed Forces Journal International 113 (Mar 1976), 25.

[54]Sen Barry Goldwater, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Unified Commands," Senate floor speech on 3 Oct 1985 in Armed Forces Journal International 123 (Oct 1985), 17.

[55]Boo, 34.

The Act had far reaching effects on how the military interacted with policy, although not apparent to most political and military leaders at the time. The CJCS was now designated as the principal military adviser to the President, National Security Council, and Secretary of Defense. He did not have to act as a spokesman for the service chiefs. The CJCS clout in policy was also increased by requiring that communications to the combatant commands be passed from national command authority through the CJCS. Additionally, the service chiefs' primary role to organize, train, and equip their forces with authority vested in the combatant commanders in chief (CINC's) was clarified so as to avoid convoluted chains of command as experienced in Vietnam and later in Grenada. The overall impact of the Goldwater-Nichols Act was to elevate the role of the military viewpoint thus fusing a closer tie of military strategy to national security policy.

Linking National Will to Political-Military Balance

On a crisp November weekend in 1982, thousands of Vietnam veterans, their families, and mournful Americans streamed into Washington to dedicate the Vietnam War Memorial. Engraved on the memorial, a simplistic wall of polished black stone, were the names of the military personnel killed in Vietnam. Although the memorial is not as visible as other Washington Mall attractions because it blends into a gentle slope of ground, it has attracted more and continues to attract more Americans than any other memorial or monument in Washington D.C. Americans are reverently quiet as they walk along the wall. Some stop to just stare dazingly at the wall and many will cry, even though they know little of what happened in Vietnam. It has become to symbolize more than the just the lives lost in a war two decades prior, but also America's enduring attachment to the lives of its sons and daughters who are sent to fight the nation's wars.

In the course of American history, the American people have always had a jealous national regard for the lives of its military personnel. This regard has manifested itself in a unique and strong national will that has enabled the American people to come together, to mobilize the required resources, and go to war in a heat of passion. This occurred even when the American

mood was strongly isolationist. It was the miscalculation of this national will that led to Japan's decision to attack the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. The miscalculation proved fatal as America would not sue for peace but take the war to Japan and Germany. In 1976, Army Chief of Staff General Fred Weyand commented on this attachment between the American people and the military, in particular the army.

> Vietnam was a reaffirmation of the peculiar relationship between the American Army and the American people. The American Army really is a people's army in the sense that it belongs to the American people who take a jealous and proprietary interest in its involvement. When the army is committed the American people are committed, when the American people lose their commitment it is futile to try to keep the army committed. In the final analysis, the American Army is not so much an arm of the Executive Branch as it is an arm of the American people. The army, therefore, cannot be committed lightly.[56]

However, in Vietnam was different. The passion of the American people was never aroused to fight a war in Vietnam. There was no direct danger to American citizens by submarine attack or a surprise attack on American soil that killed hundreds of Americans. There was not a clear military invasion of a peaceful country. Instead, America saw the horrible picture of a little girl running down the road seared with napalm and the Saigon police chief executing a suspected Viet Cong terrorist. America also saw body bags. Body bags of sons and daughters sent to a faraway place for a cause that was not understood by many Americans. Harry Summers, who gained much attention for his Clausewitzian analysis of the Vietnam War, asserted that the Vietnam War was fought in cold blood. "All of America's previous wars were fought in the heat of passion. Vietnam was fought in cold blood, and that was intolerable to the American people."[57]

Congress, took the first step to reestablish the link between the national will of the American people with the political decision to commit US combat forces. Congress, concerned

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[56]Gen Fred C. Weyand, "Vietnam Myths and Vietnam Realities," Armor 85 (Sep-Oct 76), 36.

[57]Summers, Vietnam War in Context, 23.

with the increasing imperial role of the Presidency and sensing the shifting mood of the American people regarding the deployment of combat troops overseas, sensed the opportunity to curb the war making powers of the President. Coming just after the last combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in November 1973, Congress passed the War Powers Act over President Nixon's veto. The Act requires the President to consult with Congress before military forces are committed into situations of imminent hostile actions. It also stated that military action could continue for sixty days and be extended to ninety days if the safety of the force to withdraw was in question. However, under no circumstance could the involvement be continued beyond ninety days unless Congress specifically authorized it by declaration of war.

Although there have been several situations to which the War Powers Act has applied, every President has chosen to essentially ignore it citing it as an unconstitutional restriction on the authority of the President as Commander In Chief. However, in one incident, the Congressional threat of invoking the War Powers Act forced the President to carefully consider other alternatives to military force. This was the case in the aftermath of the Beirut bombing incident in October 1983 in which 241 marines were killed. The public outcry over the loss of life in an unclear peace keeping role was enormous. An investigation, the Long Commission, reported that although the marines had been sent in a strictly "peace keeping role," the marines were placed in an impossible position between opposing hostile forces without clear objectives, inadequate training to counter terrorism, and inadequate intelligence support. The report also stated that rules of engagement were not clear and command and control arrangements were uncertain as to who was actually in charge.[58] Sensing the national mood, Congress decided to test the War Powers Act. President Reagan, not wanting a showdown with Congress over the issue, issued instructions to withdraw the marines to offshore ships. In this case, the War Powers Act forced the President to more carefully balance alternatives with the national will before the continued commitment of US military force, the full role envisaged by the Constitution. As a result, the War

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[58]Weinberger, 158.

Powers Act effectively added more rational balance to the political decision to commit military force.

Another critical relink of national will with the political decision to commit US military force was the increased role of the reserve forces since the end of the Vietnam War. Unlike all previous wars America had fought, there was no large scale mobilization of reserve forces during the Vietnam War. During the Spanish-American War, the strength of the regular army was 58,688 while the National Guard provide 8,207 officers and 162,747 enlisted personnel. In World War I, the newly formed Army Reserve provided 208,000 men to the regular 127,588 at the war's beginning. During World War II, the first US military unit to see action was the National Guard's 32nd Infantry Division in New Guinea. The National Guard would furnish 300,034 men for active service by the end of the war. In Korea, the Army Reserve contributed 244,300 personnel with the National Guard furnishing 138,600.[59]

The reasons for not mobilizing the reserve force were political. President Johnson equated the reserve call up with an expanded total war effort, the signaling of a national resolve and determination to win the war. He reasoned and correctly so that "the call up of reserve forces affects the American public much more directly than the deployment of regular forces, and is a more dramatic, summary and visible policy move than increasing the draft call."[60] The reserve mobilization would not only fiscally doom President Johnson's Great Society Program, but it could also send the wrong political signal to China or the Soviets. President Johnson was ever fearful of another Korea. Instead, to meet the increasing manpower requirements, he relied on the draft, against the recommendations of the military. "Lyndon Johnson astonished the defense establishment by refusing to call up the reserves to support expansion of the war in Vietnam,

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[59]Summers, Critical Analysis of the Gulf War, 70.

[60]John R. Probert, "The Reserves and National Guard: Their Changing Role in National Defense," in New Civil-Military Relations, ed. John P. Lovell, Philip S. Kronenberg (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1974), 130.

perhaps the most fateful decision of the entire conflict."[61] By not calling up the reserves, the American public was sidelined from the war. It meant that the national will of the American was not getting touched. Defense analyst Lewis Sorely put it more succinctly.

> Except for those who were actually out there fighting it, Lyndon Johnson's policy of trying to fight the war on the cheap, on the sly almost, and without involving the larger community, meant that the general population had no stake in it, and hence no motivation to ensure that the sacrifices of those who did serve were in some way validated by the eventual outcome. Perhaps that was the most fateful result of all.[62]

It was General Creighton Abrams in the early 70's that pushed the military for a new 'total force' policy. General Abrams served as a MACV commander in Vietnam and then as Army Chief of Staff. He fully recognized that the reserves were the ideal instrument to revitalize the 'remarkable trinity' to insure the American people, their consciousness, was aroused when their army was committed to combat. To do this, General Abrams directed that the army would not be cut from 13 to 10 divisions as programmed, but would grow to 16 divisions. This would be done by rounding out active army divisions with combat brigades from the National Guard. In addition he moved much combat support and combat services support functions from the regular army to the Army Reserve. Such a reliance was built into the reserve force structure that the regular army could not be deployed without mobilizing the reserves. General Abrams called his initiative the "Total Army" and within a few years, the other services had adopted the Abrams initiative. The new concept was termed the "Total Force" and would force a President to use the Reserve in any major military action. In 1982, General John Vessey, CJCS, was questioned on the prudence to require the calling up of the reserves in any large deployment. He aptly commented that it is why the military did it. The military would not go to war without the reserves, insuring the military did not slowly slip into a war without arousing the passion of the American people. The national will

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[61]Lewis Sorely, "Creighton Abrams and Active-Reserve Integration in Wartime," Parameters 21(Summer 91), 37.

[62]Ibid., 39.

was now linked to political decision to commit the military, adding balance to the political-military

decision making process. The acid test of this new balance came in 1991, when the President,

Congress, and ultimately the American people decided to commit US forces to war against Iraq.

CHAPTER V

MANIFESTATION OF POLITICAL-MILITARY BALANCE

On January 16, 1991 the US led coalition initiated Operation Desert Storm. For many military units, it had been nearly six months of endless daily training, war gaming, and boredom in the 'sandbox' while they awaited the war decision. But for the US military, it had been two decades of war preparation, vowing never again to repeat the debacle of the last war, the Vietnam War. All the senior military leaders in the desert had fought in Vietnam and many had commanded battalions, regiments, and squadrons. They had seen the mistakes made in Vietnam, stayed loyal through the hard times, through the 'hollow force,' and then were instrumental in the professional rejuvenation of the military. This war would be different and they knew it. The US military had all the advantages this time. They had well trained troops, superior equipment, and a campaign plan that used the US strengths - technology, excellent intelligence, and superior mobility. This war had also been doctrinally fought by not only the senior leaders, but by the leaders throughout the ranks in the deserts at Fort Irwin and Nellis Air Force Base. They were ready. It seemed that they could not lose, as long as the political leadership would let them win. As President Bush addressed the nation in the first hours of the war, he also signaled that this war would be different. "As I report to you, air attacks are under way against military targets in Iraq ... I've told the American people before that this will not be another Vietnam. And I repeat this here tonight. Our troops will have the best possible support in the entire world, and they will not be asked to fight with one hand tied behind their back." Six weeks later, after an 39 day air offensive and a 100 hour ground offensive rout of the Iraqi Army, President Bush reported: "It's a proud day for Americans and by God, we've licked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all."

Licking the Vietnam Syndrome

This time the politicians did not operationally direct the war. The field commander, General Schwarzkopf, had considerable operational flexibility to plan and execute his strategy.

For the most part targets were not dictated by politicians or Pentagon planners. Recommendations were made from Washington, but there was no doubt that General Schwarzkopf who was in charge of the battlefield. Probably more than anyone else, the leader that had insured that latitude be given to the field commander, was General Colin Powell, CJCS. In the hours after the execute orders were signed to begin the war, General Powell spoke to the President to remind him to let the military do its job. "There will be bad news, things will blow up in our faces. You'll be very tempted to get hands-on, to try to fix problems yourself. You'll collect scar tissue and people will be kicking you around on television. This is going to take a while, and the more you can leave us alone to work our way through it as military professionals, the better it will be."[63]

General Powell had also insured that military strategy was fused with national policy. From the very start of Operation Desert Shield, President Bush had demanded the "immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait." When it became evident that this national policy objective could only be achieved with an offensive capability, General Powell insured that sufficient force was deployed to meet the objective. It was the acknowledgment of Weinberger's Doctrine: "If we decide it is necessary to put combat troops into a given situation, we should do so wholeheartedly, and with the clear intention of winning." To leave no doubt about winning, General Powell forged political support for an additional army corps and air force squadrons to be transferred to General Schwarzkopf, even before the infamous 'left hook' was planned. General Powell also worked hard with Schwarzkopf to insure the offense showed restraint. He knew that an Iraq left in shambles was not in accordance with the policy objectives. Because of Powell's pivotal role, as the Goldwater-Nichols Act had intended, he insured military strategy was inextricably fused with national policy.

President Bush also played the pivotal political role to insure the passion and support of the American people was aroused. He likened Saddam Hussein to Hitler and highlighted the

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[63]Bob Woodward, The Commanders (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 373.

brutality of Iraq's aggression against an Arab neighbor. He knew the political significance of the reserve forces and in only eight days into the Desert Shield Deployment, he activated the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF). CRAF was a contractual arrangement with US airlines to provide airlift for US forces in a national emergency. CRAF had never been activated since its beginning in 1952. President Bush also called-up the largest mobilization of reserve forces since the Korean War. Needed logistical, medical, and combat support functions could not be obtained without a reserve mobilization. It was the realization of General Abrams' total force initiative two decades earlier. The call-up of the reserves, with families in virtually every town and city in the US, significantly shaped public support for the deployment of US military forces. Contrary to what President Johnson had feared in Vietnam, the political impact of the reserve mobilization "proved to be Bush's greatest asset in building and maintaining public support for his actions."[64]

The final act to insure national commitment to the use of military force was to seek a resolution of support from Congress. Although cautioned by some advisors against pressing Congress for a vote to go to war, President Bush sought Congressional support. With estimates of American dead in a ground offensive ranging as high as 15,000, President Bush feared that when the body bags started coming home, there would be a call to stop the war. Just four days before the start of Desert Storm, Congress passed a resolution authorizing military force. Although the vote was close in the Senate, 52 to 47, this was the clearest expression of national will to commit military force. It was the final link to secure a solid political-military balance to commit lives to battle.

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[64]Summers, Critical Analysis of the Gulf War, 175.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

There are never purely political or military solutions to national security policy. There must be a blending of viewpoints, political and military to achieve a balanced national policy and strategy. In the American political experience, stemming from a liberal democratic mistrust of the military, the founding fathers clearly subordinated the military viewpoint to the President. However, in the course of American history, the military has had great influence on national policy in time of war resulting in close political-military integration. This was the pattern through World War II. When polarized tensions with the Soviet Union created a different kind of 'political war,' the political point of view dominated, and eventually detached the military point of view from national security decisions. This Cold War political takeover of the national policy process provided the basis for political-military integration failure during the Vietnam War. The military became a tool to wield about to send political signals, tightly controlled by political leaders to insure the correct political signals were sent. The tragedy of it all, 58,000 American dead for a cause that was lost, must 'never again' be repeated.

In the aftermath of the Vietnam failure, political and military corrections were applied to avoid another Vietnam. The military aggressively rededicated itself to a new professionalism, rethinking doctrine and reequipping for war. The military also linked national will to the political-military equation by restructuring critical combat support forces in the reserves. This new 'total force' would insure the passion of the American people was aroused, an intangible moral requirement that is part of the American way of war. The War Powers Act was a Congressional attempt to also force the President to seek approval from the American peoples' elected representatives prior to the commitment of US force. Although all Presidents have ignored the Act, it has forced political leaders to more closely weigh alternatives, to balance the military viewpoint, before the commitment of US forces into hostile areas.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 also brought a closer fusion of military strategy with national security policy. It solidified the role of the CJCS as principal advisor to the President and National Security Council. This elevated the role of the CJCS bringing the military viewpoint more in line and a part of the national security policy process. The Weinberger Doctrine also helped fuse military strategy and national security policy. It became a litmus test for military operations not only making sure the troops were committed with clear policy guidance, but that the political objectives set forth were achievable by military action. The doctrine demanded an integration of political objectives with realistic military capability to insure troops were not 'hung out to dry.' The Weinberger Doctrine heavily influenced national decision making through President Reagan and Bush's term in office to include the Gulf War.

In the new strategic environment of the Post-Cold War period, the US national security strategy highlights the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, regional aggression, and threats to the stability of states. There is no longer the monolithic Soviet threat to focus national security policy on. Together and with the advent of global television, there is increased likelihood the US military will be committed to regional military operations in which the vital interest and national security of the US are not effected. Operations will have a more political character to them. It is more important than ever to maintain a balanced political-military viewpoint in the policy process. The determination of where and what is a proper balance must be continually assessed and adjusted when formulating national security policy. This will present a continuing and dynamic challenge to our nation's political and military leaders. We can never forget the Clausewitz dictum that stated the importance of political-military integration. "War is politics - intercourse of governments and peoples ... a continuation of politics by other means. War cannot be divorced from political life; and whenever this occurs in our thinking about war, the many links that connect the two elements are destroyed and we are left with something pointless and devoid of sense."[65]

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[65]Clausewitz, 605.

The US military must also continue to focus on its traditional war fighting duty to fight and win the nation's wars. It is the professional competence to avoid war, prepare for war, and win war that is duty of the military. The looming danger to this core professional competence is that it can be quickly drained off by dabbling in extended planning and preparation for operations other than war. These scenarios are more likely to occur in the new environment and there will be political pressure to expend resources to prepare for them. Such scenarios include humanitarian relief, peace keeping/making operations, and nation building. None of these scenarios are directly related to war fighting. It does not take long for a highly technical military to lose competence when conducting operations that do not directly lend themselves to combat training. If military competence falters, so does credibility to balance the political decision makers in the security policy making process. If balance is to maintained, the military must bring to the table, a high degree of capability and credibility.

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